THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) As per the available information there are 74 Indian PoWs in Pakistan jails, including 54 since 1971-72. Pakistan, however, does not acknowledge the presence of any PoW in its jails.

(b) Government have been pressing Pakistan Government to accept a visit by the families of the missing defence personnel to various jails in Pakistan. The matter was taken up again during EAM's visit to Pakistan in January 2007. This time Pakistan accepted the suggestion. Government have proposed the visit of a delegation to Pakistan in April 2007.

(c) During EAM's visit to Pakistan, India and Pakistan agreed to establish a committee on prisoners comprising retired judges of the superior judiciary to visit jails in the two countries and propose steps to ensure humane treatment and expedite the release of prisoners who have completed their prison terms.

Amritsar-Lahore bus service

1068. KUMARI NIRMALA DESHPANDE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the occupancy in the Amritsar-Lahore bus Service;

(b) the reasons for low occupancy; and

(c) the steps being taken to have full occupancy?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) The Amritsar-Lahore bus service is operated by Punjab Roadways. Its average occupancy is reported to be around 30-35%. High fare, availability of more convenient alternative modes of travel and the time taken in getting visa for Pakistan and security clearance are possible reasons for the low occupancy.

Attack on Tamils in Sri Lanka

1069. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Sri Lankan Air Force and Army are indiscriminately attacking the Tamils there during the current war between

Sri Lanka and LTTE and several innocent Tamils are being killed and injured;

(b) whether using such attacks, hospitals and schools of eleven Tamils are targeted and attacked, resulting into the death of school children and patients;

(c) if so, whether there would be some concrete effort on the part of Government of India to save the Tamils in Sri Lanka; and

(d) whether Government of India would be silent like this, in case some other parts of our Indian origin are affected there?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d) There have been hostilities between the Sri Lankan armed forces and the LTTE since the beginning of 2006, which have resulted in serious loss of lives including that of Tamil civilians. While conveying our concern at civilian casualities, we have emphasised to the Government of Sri Lanka that the only solution to the ethnic problem is a negotiated political settlement acceptable to all communities in Sri Lanka. We have also emphasised to the Government of Sri Lanka the need to make all possible efforts to strengthen the ceasefire and to revive the political dialogue in order to move the peace process forward.

Finalisation of Joint Anti-Terror Mechanism

1070. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indo-Pak Joint Commission has finalized Agenda for recently constituted Joint Anti-Terror Mechanism;

(b) if so, the issues on which both sides have agreed to take the dialogue forward in order to combat terrorism, the biggest menace in the post-cold war era; and

(c) the progress made in this regard by India and Pakistan, till date?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) No. The Joint Commission does not deal with the joint anti-terrorism mechanism.